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"OVER THE TOP"

By ARTHUR GUY EMPEY

An American Boy Who Got Into the War Two Years Before His Country.

CHAPTER XXV—Continued.

As dawn began to break, he could discern little dark objects protruding from the ground all about him. Curiosity mastered his fear and he crawled to one of the objects, and there, in the uncertain light, he read on a little wooden cross:

"Lac. H. S. Wheaton, No. 1670, 1st London Regt. R. F. Killed in action, April 25, 1916. R. I. P." (Rest in Peace.)

When it dawned on him that he had been hiding all night in a cemetery his reason seemed to leave him, and a mad desire to be free from it all made him rush madly away, falling over little wooden crosses, smashing some and trampling others under his feet.

In his flight he came to an old French dugout, half caved in and partially filled with slimy and filthy water.

Like a fox being chased by the hounds, he ducked into this hole and threw himself on a pile of old empty sandbags, wet and mildewed. Then—unconsciousness.

On the next day, he came to; far distant voices sounded in his ears. Opening his eyes in the entrance of the dugout he saw a corporal and two men with fixed bayonets.

The corporal was addressing him:

"Get up, you white-livered blighter! Curse you and the day you ever joined a company, spoiling their fine record! It'll be you up against the wall, and a good job too. Get hold of him, then, and if he makes a break, give him the bayonet, and send it home, the cowardly sneak. Come on, you, move, we've been looking for you long enough."

Lloyd, trembling and weakened by his long fast, tottered out, assisted by a soldier on each side of him.

They took him before the captain, but could get nothing out of him but:

"For God's sake, sir, don't have me shot, don't have me shot!"

The captain, utterly disgusted with him, sent him under escort to division headquarters for trial by courtmartial, charged with desertion under fire.

They shoot deserters in France.

During his trial, Lloyd sat as one dazed, and could put nothing forward in his defense, only an occasional "Don't have me shot!"

His sentence was passed: "To be [illegible] in the morning of May 18, 1916." This meant that he had only one more day to live.

He did not realize the awfulness of his sentence; his brain seemed paralyzed. He knew nothing of his trip, under guard, in a motor lorry to the sandbagged guardroom in the village, where he was dumped on the floor and left, while a sentry with a fixed bayonet paced up and down in front of the entrance.

Bully beef, water and biscuits were left beside him for his supper.

The sentry, seeing that he ate nothing, came inside and shook him by the shoulder, saying in a kind voice:

"Cheero, laddie, better eat something. You'll feel better. Don't give up hope. You'll be pardoned before morning. I know the way they run these things. They're only trying to scare you, that's all. Come now, that's a good lad, eat something. It'll make the world look different to you."

The good hearted sentry knew he was lying about the pardon. He knew nothing short of a miracle could save the poor lad.

Lloyd listened eagerly to his sentry's words, and believed them. A look of hope came into his eyes, and he ravenously ate the meal beside him.

In about an hour's time the chaplain came to see him, but Lloyd would have none of him. He wanted no parson, he was to be pardoned.

The artillery behind the lines suddenly opened up with everything they had. An intense bombardment of the enemy's lines had commenced. The roar of the guns was deafening. Lloyd's fears came back with a rush, and he cowered on the earthen floor with his hands over his face.

The sentry, seeing his position, came in and tried to cheer him by talking to him.

"Never mind them guns, boy, they won't hurt you. They are ours. We are giving the Boches a dose of their own medicine. Our boys are going over the top at dawn of the morning to take their trenches. We'll give 'em a taste of cold steel with their sausages and beer. You just sit tight now until they relieve you. I'll have to go now, lad, as it's nearly time for my relief, and I don't want them to see me a-talkin' with you. So long, laddied, cheero!"

With this, the sentry resumed the pacing of his post. In about ten minutes' time he was relieved and a D company man took his place.

Looking into the guardhouse, the sentry noticed the cowering attitude of Lloyd, and, with a sneer, said to him:

"Instead of whimpering in that corner, you ought to be saying your prayers. It's bally conscripts like you what's spoilin' our record. We've been out here nigh onto eighteen months, and you're the first man to desert his post. The whole battalion is laughin' and pokin' fun at D company, bad luck to you. But you won't get anothey chance to disgrace us. They'll put your lights out in the mornin'."

After listening to this tirade, Lloyd in a faltering voice, asked: "They are not going to shoot me, are they? Why, the other sentry said they'd pardon me. For God's sake—don't tell me I'm to be shot!" and his voice died away in a sob.

"Of course, they're going to shoot you. The other sentry was just a-kiddin' you. Just like old Smith. Always a-tryin' to cheer some one. You ain't got no more chance o' bein' pardoned than I have of gettin' to be colonel of my 'batt.'"

When the fact that all hope was gone finally entered Lloyd's brain, a calm seemed to settle over him, and rising to his knees, with his arms stretched out to heaven, he prayed, and all of his soul entered into the prayer.

"O, good and merciful God, give me strength to die like a man! Deliver me from this coward's death. Give me a chance to die like my mates in the fighting line, to die fighting for my country. I ask this of thee."

A peace, hitherto unknown, came to him, and he crouched and cowered no more, but calmly waited the dawn, ready to go to his death. The shells were bursting all around the guardroom, but he hardly noticed them.

While waiting there, the voice of the sentry, singing in a low tone, came to him. He was singing the chorus of the popular trench ditty:

I want to go home, I want to go home,
I don't want to go to the trenches no more.
Where the "whizzbangs" and "sausages" roar galore.
Take me over the sea, where the Allemand can't get me.
Oh, my, I don't want to die! I want to go home.

Lloyd listened to the words with a strange interest, and wondered what kind of a home he would go to across the Great Divide, it would be the only home he had ever known.

Suddenly there came a great rushing through the air, a blinding, a deafening report, and the sandbag walls of the guardroom toppled over, and then—blackness.

When Lloyd recovered consciousness, he was lying on his right side, facing what used to be the entrance of the guardroom. Now, it was only a jumble of rent and torn sandbags. His head seemed busting. He slowly rose on his elbow, and there in the east the dawn was breaking. But what was that mangled shape lying over there among the sandbags? Slowly dragging himself to it, he saw the body of the

He Betrayed His Country.

sentry. One look was enough to know that he was dead. The soldier's head was missing. The sentry had had his wish gratified. He had "gone home." He was safe at last from the "whizzbangs" and the Allemand.

Like a flash it came to Lloyd that he was free. Free to go "over the top" with his company. Free to die like a true Briton fighting for his king and country. A great gladness and warmth came over him. Carefully stepping over the body of the sentry, he started on a mad race down the ruined street of the village, amid the bursting shells, minding them not, dodging through or around hurrying platoons on their way to also go "over the top." Coming to a communication trench he could not get through. It was blocked with laughing, cheering and cursing soldiers. Climbing out of the trench, he ran wildly along the top, never heeding the rain of machine-gun bullets and shells, not even hearing the shouts of the officers, telling him to get back into the trench. He was going to join his company who were in the front line. He was going to fight with them. He the despised coward, had come into his own.

While he was racing along, jumping over trenches crowded with soldiers, a ringing cheer broke out all along the front line, and his heart sank. He knew he was too late. His company had gone over. But still he ran madly. He would catch them. He would die with them.

Meanwhile his company had gone "over." They, with the other companies had taken the first and second German trenches, and had pushed steadily on to the third line. D company, led by their captain, the one who had sent Lloyd to division headquarters for trial, charged with desertion, had pushed steadily forward until they found themselves far in advance of the rest of the attacking force. "Bombing out" trench after trench, and using their bayonets, they came to a German communication trench, which ended in a blindsap, and then the captain, and what was left of his men, knew they were in a trap. They would not retire. D company never retired, and they were D company. Right in front of them they could see hundreds of Germans preparing to rush them with bomb and bayonet. They would have some chance if ammunition and bombs could reach them from the rear. Their supply was exhausted, and the men realized it would be a case of dying as bravely as possible, or making a run for it. But D company would not run. It was against their traditions and principles.

The Germans would have to advance across an open space of three or four hundred yards before they could get within bombing distance of the trench, and then it would be all their own way.

Turning to his company, the captain said:

"Men, it's a case of going West for us. We are out of ammunition and bombs, and the Boches have us in a trap. They will bomb us out. Our bayonets are useless here. We will have to go over and meet them, and it's a case of thirty to one, so send every thrust home, and die like the men of D company should. When I give the word, follow me, and up, and at them. Give them h—l! Lord, if we only had a machine gun, we could wipe them out! Here they come, get ready, men!"

Just as he finished speaking, the welcome "pup-pup" of a machine gun in their rear rang out, and the front line of the onrushing Germans seemed to melt away. They waved, but once again came rushing onward. Down went their second line. The machine gun was taking an awful toll of lives. Then again they tried to advance, but the machine gun mowed them down. Dropping their rifles and bombs, they broke and fled in a wild rush back to their trench, amid the cheers of "D" company. They were forming again for another attempt, when in the rear of D company came a mighty cheer. The ammunition had arrived and with it a battalion of Scotch to re-enforce them. They were saved. The unknown machine gunner had come to the rescue in the nick of time.

With the re-enforcements it was an easy task to take the third German line.

After the attack was over, the captain and three of his non-commissioned officers wended their way back to the position where the machine gun had done its deadly work. He wanted to thank the gunner in the name of D company for his magnificent deed. They arrived at the gun, and an awful sight met their eyes.

Lloyd had reached the front line trench, after his company had left it. A strange company was nimbly crawling up the trench ladders. They were re-enforcements going over. They were Scotties, and they made a magnificent sight in their brightly colored kilts and bare knees.

Jumping over the trench, Lloyd raced across No Man's Land, unheeding the rain of bullets, leaping over dark forms on the ground some of which lay still, while others called out to him as he speeded past.

He came to the German front line, but it was deserted, except for heaps of dead and wounded—a grim tribute to the work of his company, good old D company. Leaping trenches, and gasping for breath, Lloyd could see right ahead of him his company in a dead-ended sap of a communication trench, and across the open, away in front of them, a mass of Germans preparing for a charge. Why didn't D company fire on them? Why were they so strangely silent? What were they waiting for? Then he knew—their ammunition was exhausted.

But what was that on his right? A machine gun. Why didn't it open fire and save them? He would make that gun's crew do their duty. Rushing over to the gun he saw why it had not opened fire. Scattered around its base lay six still forms. They had brought their gun to consolidate the captured position, but a German machine gun had decreed they would never fire again.

Lloyd rushed to the gun and, grasping the traversing handles, trained it on the Germans. He pressed the thumb piece, but only a sharp click was the result. The gun was unloaded. Then he realized his helplessness. He did not know how to load the gun. Oh, why hadn't he attended the machine-gun course in England? He'd been offered the chance, but with a blush of shame he remembered that he had been afraid. The nickname of the machine gunners had frightened him. They were called the "Suicide club." Now, because of this fear, his company would be destroyed, the men of D company would have to die, because he, Albert Lloyd, had been afraid of a name. In his shame he cried like a baby. Anyway he could die with them and rising to his feet, he stumbled over the body of one of the gunners, who emitted a faint moan. A gleam of hope flashed through him. Perhaps this man could tell him how to load the gun. Stooping over the body he gently shook it and the soldier opened his eyes. Seeing Lloyd, he closed them again, and in a faint voice said:

"Get away, you blighter, leave me alone. I don't want any coward around me."

The words cut Lloyd like a knife, but he was desperate. Taking the revolver out of the holster of the dying man he pressed the cold muzzle to the soldier's head and replied:

"Yes, it is Lloyd, the coward of Company D, but so help me God, if you don't tell me how to load that gun I'll put a bullet through your brain."

A sunny smile came over the countenance of the dying man and he said in a faint whisper:

"Good old boy! I knew you wouldn't disgrace our company——"

Lloyd interposed: "For God's sake if you want to save that company you are so proud of, tell me how to load that d—d gun!"

As if reciting a lesson in school, the soldier replied in a weak, singsong voice: "Insert tag end of belt in feed block, with left hand pull belt left front. Pull crank handle back on roller, let go, and repeat motion. Gun is now loaded. To fire, raise automatic safety latch, and press thumbpiece. Gun is now firing. If gun stops, ascertain position of crank handle——"

But Lloyd waited for no more. With wild joy in his heart, he took a belt from one of the ammunition boxes lying beside the gun, and followed the dying man's instructions. Then he pressed the thumbpiece and a burst of fire rewarded his efforts. The gun was working.

Training it on the Germans he shouted for joy as their front rank went down.

Traversing the gun back and forth along the mass of Germans, he saw them break and run back to the cover of their trench, leaving their dead and wounded behind. He had saved his company, he, Lloyd, the coward, had "done his bit." Releasing the thumbpiece, he looked at the watch on his wrist. He was still alive at "3.38."

"Ping!"—a bullet sang through the air, and Lloyd fell forward across the gun. A thin trickle of blood ran down his face from a little, black round hole in his forehead.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"The sentence of the court had been "duly carried out."

The captain slowly raised the limp form drooping over the gun and, wiping the blood from the white face, recognized it as Lloyd, the coward of D company. Reverently covering the face with his handkerchief he turned to his "noncoms" and, in a voice husky with emotion, addressed them:

"Boys, it's Lloyd, the deserter. He has redeemed himself, died the death of a hero—died that his mates might live."

That afternoon a solemn procession wended its way toward the cemetery. In the front a stretcher was carried by two sergeants. Across the stretcher the Union Jack was carefully spread. Behind the stretcher came a captain and forty-three men, all that were left of D company.

Arriving at the cemetery, they halted in front of an open grave. All about them wooden crosses were broken and trampled into the ground.

A grizzled old sergeant, noting this destruction, muttered under his breath: "Curse the cowardly blighter who wrecked those crosses! If I could only get these two hands around his neck his trip West would be short."

The corpse on the stretcher seemed to move, or it might have been the wind blowing the folds of the Union Jack.

CHAPTER XXV.

Preparing for the Big Push.

Rejoining Atwell after the execution I had a hard time trying to keep my secret from him. I think I must have lost at least ten pounds worrying over the affair.

Beginning at seven in the evening it was our duty to patrol all communication and front line trenches, making note of unusual occurrences, and arresting anyone who should, to us, appear to be acting in a suspicious manner. We slept during the day.

Behind the lines there was great activity, supplies and ammunition pouring in, and long columns of troops constantly passing. We were preparing for the big offensive, the forerunner of the battle of the Somme or "Big Push."

The never-ending stream of men, supplies, ammunition and guns pouring into the front lines made a mighty spectacle, one that cannot be described. It has to be witnessed with your own eyes to appreciate its vastness.

At our part of the line the influx of supplies never ended. It looked like a huge snake slowly crawling forward, never a hitch or break, a wonderful tribute to the system and efficiency of Great Britain's "contemptible little army" of five millions of men.

Huge fifteen-inch guns snaked along, foot by foot, by powerful steam tractors. Then a long line of "four point five" batteries, each gun drawn by six horses, then a couple of "nine point two" howitzers pulled by immense caterpillar engines.

When one of these caterpillars would pass me with its mighty monster in tow, a flush of pride would mount to my face, because I could plainly read on the name plate, "Made in U. S. A." and I would remember that if I wore a name plate it would also read, "From the U. S. A." Then I would stop to think how thin and straggly that mighty stream would be if all the "Made in U. S. A." parts of it were withdrawn.

Then would come hundreds of limbers and "G. S." wagons drawn by sleek, well-fed mules, ridden by sleek, well-fed men, ever smiling, although grimy with sweat and covered with the fine white dust of the marvelously well-made French roads.

What a discouraging report the German airmen must have taken back to their division commanders, and this stream is slowly but surely getting bigger and bigger every day, and the pace is always the same. No slower, no faster, but ever onward, ever forward.

Three weeks before the big push of July 1—as the battle of the Somme has been called—started, exact duplicates of the German trenches were dug about thirty kilos behind our lines. The layout of the trenches was taken from airplane photographs submitted by the Royal flying corps. The trenches were correct to the foot; they showed dugouts, saps, barbed wire defences and danger spots.

Battalions that were to go over in the first waves were sent back for three days to study these trenches, engage in practice attacks and have night maneuvers. Each man was required to make a map of the trenches and familiarize himself with the names and location of the parts his battalion was to attack.

In the American army non-commissioned officers are put through a course of map making or road sketching, and during my six years' service in the United States cavalry I had plenty of practice in this work, therefore mapping these trenches was a comparatively easy task for me. Each man had to submit his map to the company commander to be passed upon, and I was lucky enough to have mine selected as being sufficiently authentic to use in the attack.

No photographs or maps are allowed to leave France, but in this case it appealed to me as a valuable souvenir of the great war and I managed to smuggle it through. At this time it carries no military importance as the British lines, I am happy to say have since been advanced beyond this point, so in having it in my possession I am not breaking any regulation or cautions of the British army.

The whole attack was rehearsed and rehearsed until we heartily cursed the one who had conceived the idea.

The trenches were named according to a system which made it very simple for Tommy to find, even in the dark, any point in the German lines.

These imitation trenches, or trench models, were well guarded from observation by numerous allied planes which constantly circled above them. No German airplane could approach within observation distance. A restricted area was maintained and no civilian was allowed within three miles, so we felt sure that we had a great surprise in store for Fritz.

When we took over the front line we received an awful shock. The Germans displayed signboards over the top of their trench showing the names that we had called their trenches. The signs read "Fair," "Fact," "Fate" and "Fancy," and so on, according to the code names on our map. Then to rub it in, they hoisted some more signs which read, "Come on, we are ready, stupid English."

It is still a mystery to me how they obtained this knowledge. There had been no raids or prisoners taken, so it must have been the work of spies in our lines.

Three or four days before the big push we tried to shatter Fritz's nerves by feint attacks, and partially succeeded as the official reports of July 1 show.

Although we were constantly bombarding their lines day and night, still we fooled the Germans several times. This was accomplished by throwing an intense barrage into his lines—then using smoke shells we would put a curtain of white smoke across No Man's Land, completely obstructing his view of our trenches, and would raise our curtain of fire as if in an actual attack. All down our trenches the men would shout and cheer, and Fritz would turn loose with machine-gun, rifle and shrapnel fire, thinking we were coming over.

After three or four of these dummy attacks his nerves must have been near the breaking point.

On June 24, 1916, at 9.40 in the morning our guns opened up, and hell was let loose. The din was terrific, a constant boom-boom-boom in your ear.

At night the sky was a red glare. Our bombardment had lasted about two hours when Fritz started replying. Although we were sending over ten shells to his one, our casualties were heavy. There was a constant stream of stretchers coming out of the communication trenches and burial parties were a common sight.

In the dugouts the noise of the guns almost hurt. You had the same sensation as when riding on the subway you enter the tube under the river going to Brooklyn—a sort of pressure on the ear drums, and the ground constantly trembling.

The roads behind the trenches were very dangerous because Boche shrapnel was constantly bursting over them We avoided these dangerous spots by crossing through open fields.

The destruction in the German lines was awful and I really felt sorry for them because I realized how they must be suffering.

From our front-line trench, every now and again, we could hear sharp whistle blasts in the German trenches. These blasts were the signals for stretcher bearers, and meant the wounding or killing of some German in the service of his fatherland.

Atwell and I had a tough time of it, patrolling the different trenches at night, but after awhile got used to it.

My old outfit, the machine gun company, was stationed in huge elephant dugouts about four hundred yards behind the front line trench—they were in reserve. Occasionally I would stop in their dugout and have a confab with my former mates. Although we tried to be jolly, still, there was a lurking feeling of impending disaster. Each man was wondering if, after the slogan, "Over the top with the best of luck," had been sounded, would he still be alive or would he be lying "somewhere in France." In an old dilapidated house, the walls of which were scarred with machine-gun bullets, No. 3 section of the machine gun company had its quarters. The company's cooks prepared the meals in this billet. On the fifth evening of the bombardment a German eight-inch shell registered a direct hit on the billet and wiped out ten men who were asleep in the supposedly bomb-proof cellar. They were buried the next day and I attended the funeral.

(To Be Continued.)

First American Advance.—American troops in the Luneville sector have occupied and are holding enemy trenches northeast of Badonvilliers, which they forced the Germans to abandon through recent raids and concentrated artillery fire. The trenches have been consolidated with ours.

This, though a small forward movement, marks the first permanent advance by the American army in France. The consolidation of the trenches enables the Americans and French to operate from higher ground than heretofore.

The Germans made only feeble attempts to retake the position but each time were repulsed.

Repeated American raids on this sector and the effective work of the American gunners forced the Germans to give up the trenches. German efforts to regain the lost positions were repulsed by Gen. Pershing's Men.

Badonvilliers is eight miles west of the German frontier and is almost directly west of Strassburg, capital of Alsace. The American position here is about 18 miles southwest of the Rhine Marne canal where the Americans first entered the trenches last November.

On both the Luneville and Toul sectors the American artillery has been firing many shells into the German positions. Northwest of Toul German plans for a gas attack again were frustrated when the American gunners destroyed four groups of gas projectors which had been placed in position. German batteries, trenches, wire entanglements and other military targets are being harassed by the Americans.

Three persons were burned to death, one was killed by a fall and two seriously injured in a fire in a theatrical boarding house in New York last Friday. It is supposed that the fire was of incendiary origin, as there have been six fires in the house since January 1.

WHEATLESS HOTEL FARE

Many Landlords Respond to Hoover's Appeal.

Wheat and wheat products were wiped off the menus of several hundred of the country's leading hotels last Friday in response to a request of the food administration that "every independent, every well-to-do person in the United States" should pledge complete abstinence from wheat until the next harvest.

Hotel managers who assembled in Washington from every state in the Union to hear new conservation regulations explained, were told by Food Administrator Hoover that a census of supplies revealed that the harvest had been less than estimated, that shipping difficulties made it imperative to feed the Allies from here instead of from the Argentine and that it is impossible to ship corn, owing to loss from germination.

Mr. Hoover said the renunciation of luxurious food must begin at the top of the social scale, not only to set an example, but because the industrial population is dependent to a large extent on bakers' bread, which must have a considerable proportion of wheat to be durable. Therefore, he asked the hotels, which have as patrons people of wealth, to refuse to serve any wheat whatever until the new crop comes in, using other cereals and potatoes instead.

"We stand at the most critical period of our national history since the battle of Gettysburg," Mr. Hoover declared. "We may have to cut our wheat consumption more than one-half, but the sacrifice must come from those who have the most, not from those who have the least.

"Our wheat acreage this year will be greater than ever before and if the Lord is good to us in the matter of weather, our difficulties will be at end by September 1. That is not a long period of sacrifice."

The reply was an outburst of applause which died away as John McE. Bowman of New York, head of the food administration's hotel division, stood up.

"How many will rise with me to signify they will comply with the chief's request?" Mr. Bowman asked.

It seemed as if everyone in the hall rose simultaneously, waving flags taken from the luncheon tables and cheering. "We have pledged ourselves to save wheat for victory," Mr. Bowman announced when quiet was restored.

Dr. Alonzo Taylor, the food administration's representative on the war trade board, told the hotel men wheat was not a necessary element of diet, but a luxury.

"Wheat has no advantage in nutrition or taste over corn, barley, rice or other cereals," Doctor Taylor declared, "and the patron who comes to you with the demand that he must have wheat and can't eat substitutes is either a slacker or a crank—and he must not humor either.

"The breakdown in the German food distribution system was due to the fact that the system was administered for the upper classes who could get delicacies at the best hotels if they had the money to pay. The poor people could not pay and were forced to suffer. There was a great contrast in England where the leading hotels were the first to cut off their menus the food needed for soldiers and workers."

Mr. Hoover made it clear that success in rationing the Allies could not be achieved other than by sacrifice in the United States.

"Our wheat situation is today the most serious situation in the food supply of the whole allied world," he began, speaking with evident feeling. "We have had a stock-taking in the early days of March," he continued, "and we find that our harvest was less than it was estimated. There is also another and more bitter difficulty in the delays of shipping, in the growing scarcity of ships, that has thrown a larger burden upon the American people in feeding the Allies than we had anticipated. We had all expected that the Argentine supply would be available in Europe before this time. Those supplies will not arrive for another two months, and even then will be less than we had expected. The consequence is that the supply of breadstuffs in Europe is at its lowest ebb. There is but one source of supply and that is the United States."

FIGHTERS MUST BE FED

Necessary for Americans to Curtail Use of Wheat.

Information that the bread ration of the French soldiers who are facing the onslaught of Germany's armies has been cut because of the shortage of wheat, has led the food administration to plan drastic measures to curb hoarding in this country. Wherever there is evidence that the withholding of food is due to disloyalty or profiteering, prompt action will be taken. State administrators have been reminded that the food law authorizes the requisitioning of grain in the national emergency and have been asked to be diligent in their investigation of cases of alleged hoarding. They will forward the evidence obtained to Washington, where steps will be taken as the individual case warrants.

Wheat for the Allies becomes more imperative as the season progresses, because of the danger of loss in shipping corn or potatoes after April 1, when the period of germination sets in. Up to March 15, the United States was 800,000 tons behind in its programme of cereal export. Much of the programme was to have been corn, but the breakdown in railroad transportation delayed shipment so that wheat had to be sent abroad to avert famine.

As only wheat and barley can be shipped after April 1, the public is being asked to cut its consumption of wheat to 50 per cent of normal and even that sacrifice barely will stretch supplies to meet demand, unless every bushel held on farms and in warehouses is put on the market.

The March 1 report of the department of agriculture showed 111,000,000 bushels of wheat on farms and 69,000,000 bushels in elevators. Since the agitation in congress to increase the price of wheat to $2.50 receipts at mills have dwindled from 8,000,000 bushels to 2,000,000 bushels a week.

The only requisitioning ordered so far has been in the case of two brothers of German ancestry, living in New Mexico, who refused all offers.

Use of potatoes as a subsitute for wheat, which has been urged by the food administration, will not be possible in some sections because of traffic congestion.

GEN. FOCH IN COMMAND

All Allied Armies Now Under One Direction.

Great Britain, the United States and Italy have agreed to place all their armies under General Foch, of the French army, during the present operations in France, and Gen. Foch is now acting as commander-in-chief.

Gen. Ferdinand Foch is of Basque origin. He was born at Tarbee in 1851, but was reared at Metz. Rather than become a German after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, Foch preferred to return to France and help to prepare France for the present German invasion.

Foch began mastering the strategy of the war of 1870 in its minutest details. Knowing the mentality of the German he counted upon their repeating in future conflicts the maneuvers that had succeeded. He also expected them to make some of the old mistakes.

In his teachings at the Superior War school and in his writings he held always to the idea of an inevitable aggression by Germany, sprung with lightning like rapidity, after long and most minute preparation—the swift thunderbolt of the opening to develop into a struggle of colossal proportions.

To parry the blow, Foch said repeatedly, France must have a staff working in the same direction, practicing the same doctrines under a vigorous and audacious chief.

Foch foresaw Joffre as clearly as he foresaw the war of 1914, arising from the same motives as the war of 1870 and developing with the same objective—Paris. He thought he saw quite as clearly a different issue, and it would be difficult to estimate the value of the service he rendered to France by communicating his confidence to the young officers. His work at the Superior War school contributed largely to the perfection of the French army which, if less "disciplined" than the German army, was held by him to be far better "educated."

The war found Foch at Nancy, the headquarters of the Twentieth corps. His corps was attached to General Castelnau's army and he was selected to command a new army concentrating behind the center of the forces marching to the Belgian frontier to meet the Germans. This army was not ready in time to take part in the battle of Charleroi, but it contributed singularly to the victory of the Marne. Foch's 120,000 men, holding the center in that struggle, met before them nearly 200,000 Germans.

"They are so frantic in their attacks," said Foch, "it must be that things are going badly with them elsewhere, so let's hold on."

At another stage of the struggle aides came up with the disquieting news that both the right and left wings had been obliged to give ground.

"In that case," said Foch, "there's nothing to do but smash them in the center. Order up the Moors."

General DuBois, with the Moors on his left, smashed the Germans so hard in the center that the Hessian Guard was thrown back upon and into the Saint Godad marshes. Von Haun's right wing was obliged to retire in unison and Foch was able to re-establish his line.

After the battle of the Marne Foch was given command of a group of armies operating in the north of France and promoted to grand officer in the Legion of Honor. King George conferred upon him the Order of the Bath, first class.

Tall, thin, elegant—with a fine head and features—General Foch is simple of bearing but authoritative. From his gray eyes shine the intelligence and will power of a real chief. In conversation he shows his military training by directing the course of his talk like maneuver. When in May of last year General Joffre was succeeded in the command of the French armies operating on the French front by General Petain, and General Niville was placed in command of a group of armies, Foch succeeded Petain as chief of the general staff of the ministry of war, a position he has held up to the present, all the while working diligently upon the strategic moves in which the French have been so successful.

For some time it has been hinted that General Foch might be appointed head of all the allied forces, owing to his known ability as a tactician and his skill as a leader of men. All along he has been impressed with the idea that a German victory was impossible and frequently has expressed the opinion that the enemy forces would never be able to pierce the allied line.

Sheer Weight of Numbers.—In the German tactics of pushing in by sheer weight of numbers, the non-commissioned officers have proved themselves very valuable, according to a correspondent of the Daily Mail.

"They have led and rallied their men with energy and tact," he writes. "We have been told sometimes by people who pretend to understand the German army that in these very qualities non-commissioned officers would be found lacking."

"Another cause of the progress of the Germans has been the rapidity with which they have brought up their guns. Furthermore the German superiority in numbers made it possible for the men to obtain rest. In no case have the same Germans fought on two consecutive days and there were sufficient forces to admit of relief being given to tired men on crucial days of assault. As for our own men, each night I have seen some of them who were so tired when relieved that they dropped down and slept where they fell."

The fabricated hull of an 8,800-ton steel vessel was launched at a Pacific shipyard last Wednesday, just sixty-two days after the laying of the keel. This breaks the American record for rapid construction of steel vessels. The best previous record was 67 days.

STORY OF THE FIGHTING

British Inflicted Heavy Loss and Suffered Small Damage.

The great German effort, wrote an Associated Press correspondent from the French front last Friday, appears to have exhausted itself. At many places along the front of attack the enemy is being driven back and at others the French and British are offering firm resistance. Infantry fighting has begun to give place to artillery battles and in the next few days the guns may be expected to speak loudly. In this respect the British and French have the advantage, inasmuch as the Germans have been unable to drag much artillery with them. They are engaged in establishing themselves in the positions to which they have advanced, but have not had time thoroughly to organize their defenses.

The main portion of today's fighting was around the northern sector of the battlefield, where both the French and the British had a successful day, counterattacking with great vigor where the Germans threatened to push most deeply into their lines. At present the front is almost uneven. During the first rush the Germans succeeded at some places in indenting the lines so that here and there were formed pockets which sooner or later must be straightened out.

Further details concerning the first part of the battle show that no fewer than 38 German divisions were thrown simultaneously against a front held by only eight British divisions, overwhelming them and forcing them back. Behind these British divisions were only three others in reserve, but the troops fought valiantly and delayed the German advance for a considerable time.

Since then about 49 other German divisions have been hurled into the battle (a total of 87 divisions or, at the present estimated strength of the German division, about 1,000,000 men.) Not only the army of the Bavarian crown prince, but also that of the German crown prince, is now engaged. The German generals immediately commanding the troops, from the north to the south, of the front attacker, are von Below, von Marwitz and von Hutier. The army of Gen. von Hutier faces the French along the Oise. It is very quiet today, after the bloody defeat of its attempt to cross the river. Most of the briges have now been blown up.

The fighting has been much more severe in the sectors of von Below and von Marwitz. It is evident the allies are gaining the upper hand and mastering the enemy with artillery.

Owing to the terrible casualties among his aviators, the enemy is compulled to feel almost blindly for weak spots in the allied lines, which he has been seeking constantly so as to throw against them some of his dense masses. When it is remembered that the enemy had more than a division for every thousand yards of the front on which he attacked, an idea may be gained of the difficulties with which the allies have been beset.

At one point, on the Corzat Canal, where the Germans eventually gained a crossing, they made 16 different attacks one day. Finally the British corps which was holding the position, fell back, absolutely exhausted, and the Germans crossed over a bridge of piled-up bodies of their own comrades.

The German advance has been more rapid at some points and the allies have scarcely had time to get away their cannon, as no horses were near. One French battery of 75s was dragged five miles with ropes by the gunners, who succeeded in saving it.

One of the German prisoners expressed surprise at the small number of British dead found on the battlefield. They had been told the British in front of them had been annihilated. It was evident small groups had fought gamely to the last, giving the Germans the impression that large forces were facing them.

The same prisoner said the Germans had formed a special corps, whose duties were to advance behind the fighting troops and strip all clothing from the dead. The bodies, he said were buried without any covering, and the clothing thus obtained was served out again.

Reports from other parts of the front seem to indicate that elsewhere the line is being held by mediocre divisions brought from the Russian front, the best troops having been withdrawn to participate in the battle. Every one of the divisions which has been identified since the offensive began had been already classified as effective. Among them are three of the famous guard divisions and some of Bavarians.

Whether the Germans will hurl more divisions into the furnace, is of course, unknown. It is considered possible that they still have approximately 40 divisions which may be used to replace those that have suffered most heavily in the recent offensive

Aluminum Production in the United States.—The recent action of the president in fixing the price of aluminum at 32 cents calls attention to the rapid growth of this industry in the United States, which has now become the leading world producer of aluminum. A compilation by The National City Bank of New York shows that the production of aluminum in the United States has grown from 60,000 lbs. in 1890 to 7,000,000 in 1900, 48,000,000 in 1910, 100,000,000 in 1915, 140,000,000 in 1916, and approximately 180,000,000 in 1917, these figures being in round terms. The value of the product, which amounted to a couple of million in 1900, was 16 millons in 1915, and approximately 46 millions in 1917. Exports of aluminum from the United States have grown from $1,047,000 in 1914 to $20,300,000 in 1917.—Commerce and Finance.—(N. Y.)

President Wilson has made a telegraphic request to Governor Stephens of California, in behalf of Thomas J. Mooney, now under death sentence for participation in a bomb explosion which occurred at San Francisco in July, 1916, during the preparedness parade, which caused the death of ten persons and injury of forty others. The president asks the governor to exercise executive clemency.